2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

attractive touch to an otherwise uninspiring landscape. A fringe of uninhabited bush, the home of a fair amount of game, follows the course of the two Voltas. From the Tong Hills the area of close settlement and perennial cultivation spreads out like a fan to the west, north, and east. Generally speaking, settlement is relatively sparse and recent along the periphery of this area, except in the north to north-west segment, and densest and most ancient in the middle.

The Northern Territories of the Gold Coast have been under effective Government control for about twenty-five years. From the first efforts were made to develop modern communications. At the present time a main road, suitable for motor traffic, connects Bawku in Kusaasi district, the northernmost administrative station, with Tamale, the capital of the Northern Territories, 145 miles to the south, and continues from there to Kumasi in Ashanti, another 220 miles. Branches link it with the principal Government stations in the Northern Territories. This road system was maintained, until recently, only for essential services in the wet season, but was always passable in the dry season. In 1936 large-scale works were undertaken to make it a permanent highway. Head carriage and footpaths still remain the only means of local transport and communications. About 50 miles of this road system traverse the Zuarungu district, the administrative head-quarters of which is at Zuarungu (Talni, *Zuŋaruŋ*) on the central road.

The people we are concerned with in this book occupy less than half of the Zuarungu district. Their country, which, for convenience of reference may be called Taleland, embraces most of the southern half of the district between the two Voltas and the western boundary. On the north it can be demarcated only by an arbitrary boundary which extends in a wavy line from Zuarungu due east to the river. A typical section of the district, Taleland includes the Tong Hills, the vicinity of which harbours the densest and oldest settlements of the country. Its total population, according to the 1931 census, numbers about 35,000. Nearly a third of it is concentrated within a radius of two or three miles of the Hills. I estimate the total area of Taleland at about 300 square miles, which would imply an average population density of approximately 100 to the square mile, though the actual density of settlement in the inhabited areas must be considerably higher. Thus Taleland is thickly populated, by African standards.

Cultural Affinities of the Tallensi

Delafosse, in his monumental survey[1] of the peoples of the western Sudan, distinguished five 'families' by ethnological and linguistic criteria. His largest division, the Voltaic family, comprises the tribes inhabiting the basin of the Volta rivers, from approximately 9° 30′ to 14° N. latitude.[2] Delafosse subdivides the Voltaic family into seven branches, one of which, the Mossi group, includes all the peoples living between Ouagadougou in the French Upper Ivory Coast and Salaga in the Gold Coast.

More recent research has not invalidated Delafosse's broad classification.

[1] Delafosse, M., *Haut-Sénégal-Niger*, 3 vols., 1912.
[2] Op. cit., i, pp. 115 ff.

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

in their spare time, and chiefly in the dry season when there is no farm work. They are exceedingly few in numbers—one or two in a settlement—and their work is of mediocre quality. The only blacksmiths in Taleland are about a dozen men of the Sakpee clan of Tenzugu, and only one of them derives a substantial part of his livelihood from his craft. A leather-worker or two, a potteress, a sewer of caps, may be found in almost every settlement. Some men and women who are more skilful than their neighbours at making articles of common use such as hen-coops, baskets, bows, adze-shafts, &c., are in the habit of making a few for sale every dry season. The only specialized occupation is that of the diviner, and it, also, is a part-time occupation in addition to farming, though a popular diviner, making perhaps a shilling or eighteen pence a day, may farm less land than he normally would. Diviners are numerous. There may be as many as ten or twenty in a large settlement, but only one or two of them will earn more than a few pence a day by divining.

British Rule and Contact with Western Civilization

Until the time of my first visit to Taleland the natives had been very little influenced by the agencies of British government and of European civilization that are active in these parts. The main roads skirt Taleland so that the flow of north- and south-bound traffic by-passes the largest part of the area. Nevertheless, these roads have served to open up Taleland to a wider sphere of intercourse with other parts of the Gold Coast than was possible twenty years before. Political and social conditions made it impossible for people to travel freely beyond a radius of a few miles from their own settlements in former days. To-day young men and even women go in increasing numbers every year, in the dry season, to Tamale, Kumasi, or the coast towns. Some go to visit friends or relatives, some carry fowls for sale, others go as seasonal labourers, and others go to work abroad for a term of years. In 1923 the Administration of the Northern Territories reluctantly agreed to assist in the recruitment of labour for the mines and cocoa farms of Ashanti and the colony. The experiment failed and was soon abandoned. Nowadays labour migration from the Northern Territories is entirely voluntary. It has become linked up with the normal economic life of the natives. Whereas, in former years, a young man moved out temporarily to the periphery of settlement on account of a shortage of land in his natal community, nowadays he often goes to Ashanti or the mines as a labourer. The cessation of agricultural activity in the dry season makes it easy for a young man to get away for a few months without loss to the routine of farming.

Economic incentives, which the natives sum up as 'the desire for money', therefore lie behind much labour migration in the Northern Territories. And the value of money may be gauged from the fact that a hen could be bought for 6*d.* to 1*s.*, a cow in good condition for £2. 10*s.*, and a dish of porridge enough for a satisfying meal for 1/10 of a penny in any market in 1934–7. But there are other incentives as well. Curiosity, and the desire to see the places and experience the life which those who return from a stay abroad describe to their fellows at home, stimulate many a youth to go south for a short or long period. And friction with

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

177 in the native social order. Apart from money and clothes, the material
167 articles, habits, and ideas which they have acquired abroad soon decay from disuse, or come to serve for ostentation only, since they have no functional relevance to the economic life and social structure of the native society.

178 The Tallensi, in short, still preserve the culture bequeathed to them by their forefathers and the social structure of their own, homogeneous society. Their economy is a primitive, static, subsistence economy. They continue to farm by the same methods and with the same tools and the same knowledge as their forefathers had. They grow no cash crops and produce no surplus of local crops for sale outside Taleland. The introduction of British currency and the opening up of the country have accelerated local exchange and slightly mitigated the hardship of winning a living by primitive technical methods from a soil of no great fertility. They have not otherwise affected the livelihood of 99 per cent. of the people.

797 Literacy and Christianity had, until 1936, barely touched the Tallensi.
872 A few children had been sent to school reluctantly in deference to the commands of the District Commissioners. Only one stayed the course and left school with a moderate command of English and the three R's. Two or three younger boys were still at school at Gambaga or Tamale. The nearest mission station to the Tallensi is that of the White Fathers at Bolaga, outside Taleland. Up to 1936 the missionaries had made only an occasional visit of reconnaissance to the nearby Tale settlements. They had succeeded in attracting only two or three Tale youths to their school. These were the sons of two ambitious, and, from the native point of view, upstart headmen who were keen to have their sons taught the white man's skills the better to serve their own political ambitions. The only one of these youths who achieved a fair degree of literacy and accepted the Christian faith was in Government employment.

177 Most of the social changes that have occurred and are taking place with
636 increasing rapidity in Taleland are due to a single powerful extraneous
648 factor, British rule. The Tallensi, in common with other tribes of these parts, put up a truculent resistance to British rule at first, and had to be subjugated by military operations and other punitive measures. The last pocket of Tale resistance, in the Tong Hills, was finally broken by a small armed force in 1911. The people of the Hills were expelled from their ancestral homes, which were razed to the ground, and lived in exile on the plains at the foot of the hills until they were permitted to return in 1935. Judging by the scanty memoranda of the Administrative officers of the decade 1911–21, the Tallensi gave them a good deal of trouble.

609 These events are still vividly remembered by the natives. Their fear
636 and suspicion of the white man was not unnatural since they had never before met him. However, their subjugation and the subsequent imposition of peace have produced in them a deep respect for the might and power of the white man. They have since learnt to have complete confidence in the justice and good intentions of the Administrative officers. They speak with gratitude of the benefits which the white man's peace

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

has brought them. But in the background there still lurk traces of fear and suspicion, a sense of the inscrutability of the white man.

The influence of British rule has naturally been most marked in Tale political life. At first it was directed towards two main ends: to maintain the peace between the Administration and the native communities as well as amongst the latter, and to ensure a sufficient supply of labour and local materials from the native population for keeping up roads and rest houses. The Administrative officers laid down boundaries, meted out justice, and backed up chiefs and headmen, mostly appointed by themselves, in the exercise of coercive powers over the mass of the people. Nothing was known about the country or the people, and the Administrative officers had to rely on their own sense of justice and their own ideas of what was in the interests of the population. The natives look back on this period with few regrets. They describe it as a time when extortion was widely practised not only by the police, the soldiers, the interpreters, and others who stood between them and the District Commissioners, but also by their newly empowered chiefs and headmen. They learnt to think of any official or unofficial servant of the white man as armed with arbitrary authority which it would be futile to resist.

The outstanding political changes due to this period were the authority given to chiefs and headmen, and the unofficial tribunals held by them. These grew up gradually out of the need to keep the peace; for the ancient method of settling disputes was by negotiation backed by armed self-help. From the native point of view the most valuable relic of this period is the embryonic legal system which grew up then. Armed self-help has disappeared, but some of the values connected with it remain. The other institutions of the native political organization retain their vigour. They function side by side with the institutions imposed by British rule, for they serve different ends and correspond to different values. It is often an uneasy partnership leading to insoluble conflicts. Most of the political troubles of the Tallensi since 1921 can be traced to the clash between interests and loyalties springing from the native political system and those created by the new political dispensation and its accompanying economic changes. For the first time in its history a few men of outstanding wealth have arisen in Taleland by extorting goods and services from their fellows on the strength of their political powers, or by exploiting opportunities due to the opening up of the country. And this has brought social friction in its train.

This period of British rule came to an end about 1931. Between 1931 and 1936 the Administration undertook a complete political reorganization of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast. The principles of what is commonly called Indirect Rule were applied. Native Authorities were established, a graded scale of direct taxation was introduced, a policy of economic development was started, and social services were multiplied. The effects of this policy will not be discernible for some years.

Taleland is a very small portion of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast. But in its culture and social structure, as in its geography and climate, it is typical of the whole plateau north of the Gambaga scarp.